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INFO RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0700
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RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0166
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 3107
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 0254
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0621
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 2562
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 7055
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000594

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION DPP AND PRO-GREEN ALLIES STAGE LARGE
PROTEST RALLIES IN TAIPEI AND KAOHSIUNG

REF: A. TAIPEI 589

[1](#)B. 08 TAIPEI 1520

Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young,
Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: The DPP and pro-Green organizations held large demonstrations in Taipei and Kaohsiung on May 17 to protest the cross-Straits and other policies of President Ma Ying-jeou, who is just completing his first year in office (ref A). Both venues attracted large turnouts, although estimates of crowd size by the police and organizers vary dramatically. When the rally in Taipei ended at 10:15 p.m., the DPP began a 24-hour sit-in at the same location to protest planned revisions to the law on demonstrations. Although there were only very minor incidents on Sunday, there was one serious accident in which a speeding police car struck two protesters on a nearby street as they were leaving the area. End Summary.

Organizers Conclude Peaceful Marches And Rallies

[1](#)2. (C) The opposition DPP and allied organizations held large and peaceful marches and rallies protesting President Ma Ying-jeou's cross-Straits and other policies on Sunday (May 17) in Taipei and Kaohsiung. A follow-on DPP protest sit-in in Taipei is scheduled to end at 10:00 p.m. Monday (May 18). Turnout estimates vary greatly, the process of counting complicated by the fact that there were people coming and going continuously during activities that lasted many hours. While the DPP claimed more than 600,000 people joined the Taipei events, government and police estimates ranged from 60,000 - 100,000. The size of the crowd at the Ketagalan Boulevard rally site appeared somewhat smaller than the October 2008 DPP rally that attracted 200,000 or more protesters against Ma (see ref B). In Kaohsiung, organizers claimed 200,000 participants, while the police estimate was 40,000.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The events in Taipei began in the early afternoon as enthusiastic participants gathered amidst sweltering heat at the starting points for the four march routes. Many marchers of all ages sported the distinctive yellow bands on their heads or arms that carried the overall slogan for the demonstration: "Oppose the Pro-China Tilt, Protect Taiwan." Some banners and signs carried by demonstrators criticized or even insulted Ma. Typical slogans on signs or t-shirts

included "Reject ECFA, Save Taiwan;" "Chinese Ma Step Down;" "Keep Taiwan Free;" "I am Taiwanese, I am not Chinese;" and "I am Taiwanese and will not be a Chinese slave." There were also scattered signs supporting former President Chen Shui-bian, on trial for corruption, one sign saying "Ah-Bian is not guilty, Ah-jeou (Ma Ying-jeou) Step Down."

¶4. (SBU) As marchers arrived at Ketagalan Boulevard, the crowd already on site cheered and it soon became almost impossible for people to move towards the stage. DPP officials on stage led the crowd in chanting "Go Taiwan" and "Step Down Ma Ying-jeou." DPP Chair Tsai Ing-wen and other leaders, including former Vice President Annette Lu and former premiers Frank Hsieh and Su Tseng-chang, took to the stage around 6:00 p.m. as the crowd cheered. Speeches criticizing Ma and his policies, musical entertainment, and skits followed. As the sky fell dark, the word "incompetent" was laser beamed onto the Presidential Office building. The rally ended with speeches by top party leaders, including Su, Hsieh, and Tsai, who reminded the audience that democracy makes Taiwan fundamentally different from China. The DPP Chair suggested the demonstration would show the international community what Taiwan wants and that Taiwan's future should not be left in China's hands.

¶5. (SBU) The organizers and police are doubtless relieved that the demonstrations were peaceful compared to the violent incidents that marred the DPP's last major demonstration. In November, several protesters and policemen were injured in clashes during demonstrations against the visit of the PRC's Chen Yunlin. The only major problem on Sunday was an

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accident in Taipei in which a speeding police car struck two elder protestors as they were leaving the demonstration, sending both to the hospital.

DPP Continues Sit-In Protest

¶6. (C) The conclusion of the DPP rally at 10:15 p.m. marked the beginning of a 24-hour sit-in at the rally site to protest government-proposed revisions to the law governing demonstrations that the DPP regards as restrictive and unacceptable. To underscore its protest, the DPP did not apply to use the street for the 24-hour sit-in, but the police did not interfere with the activity. Following Tsai's orders, DPP party and local officials and legislators gathered on the stage, while up to 10,000 supporters sat on the street in front of the stage. By mid-morning, the crowd on the street had dwindled to several hundred mostly older people, but the number could increase after work this evening and before the protest ends at 10:00 p.m.

Kaohsiung

¶7. (SBU) In Kaohsiung, Southern Taiwan Society and other pro-Green organizations held a march and rally to protest President Ma and his policies but also to support former President Chen Shui-bian. Like their Taipei counterparts, protesters marched on four routes to the rally in the city's Central Park. DPP heavyweights, including former Premier Yu Shyi-kun and Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu participated in the demonstration organized by several pro-Green organizations such as Southern Taiwan Society. Some protesters burned the KMT and PRC flags. While organizers deemed the demonstrations attracted 200,000 people, the police estimated an attendance of 40,000. KMT Kaohsiung City Chapter Chairman Shu Fu-ming noted to AIT that yesterday's rally in Kaohsiung was not as large as previous ones, probably because of recent improvements in the area's economy.

Comment

18. (C) Tsai Ing-wen announced that the demonstration in Taipei marked the beginning of a series of activities, but she did not specify what the party would do next. Party officials have told us the DPP is short of funds and that there may be a lull until July when campaigning for the December local elections is expected to start in earnest. For the moment, the DPP must try to resolve internal divisions and finalize candidate nominations for those elections.

YOUNG